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NOT-BEING IN THE SOPHIST

by



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The undersigned certify that they have read, and
recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research,
for acceptance, a thesis entitled NOT-BEING IN THE SOPHIST
submitted by Susan Haley in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

Plato in The Sophist is involved in dealing with at least three issues, which he takes to be interrelated rather in the way that Chinese boxes fit together. These are (beginning with the outside box, as it were): (1) How is it possible to make, or how are we to understand false statements? (2) How are we to understand negative predicative statements? (3) How are we to understand predication in general?

As I take it that Plato's concern with (2) and (3) stems from the way he understands Parmenides' position in The Way of Truth, where Parmenides forbids us to "let this thought prevail ... that not-being is ...", I shall, in Chapter I, attempt to give an interpretation of that position. In Chapter II I shall try to show how for Plato, making the claim that it is possible meaningfully to make false statements, involves us in the refutation of Parmenides' position in The Way of Truth. In Chapter III I shall attempt to provide an interpretation of Plato's own solution to the problem of negative predication and to provide some criticisms of it.

The major claim that I shall have to support throughout this thesis, is that both Plato and Parmenides are talking about negative predication, or predication itself, and not, as most commentators have heretofore thought, about negative existential judgements and about existence.

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INTRODUCTION

Plato in The Sophist is involved in dealing with at least three issues, which he takes to be interrelated rather in the way that Chinese boxes fit together. These are (beginning with the outside box, as it were): (1) How is it possible to make, or how are we to understand false statements? (2) How are we to understand negative predicative statements? (3) How are we to understand predication in general?

As I take it that Plato's concern with (2) and (3) stems from the way he understands Parmenides' position in The Way of Truth, where Parmenides forbids us to "let this thought prevail ... that not-being is ...", I shall, in Chapter I, attempt to give an interpretation of that position. In Chapter II I shall try to show how for Plato, making the claim that it is possible meaningfully to make false statements, involves us in the refutation of Parmenides' position in The Way of Truth. In Chapter III I shall attempt to provide an interpretation of Plato's own solution to the problem of negative predication and to provide some criticisms of it.

The major claim that I shall have to support throughout this thesis, is that both Plato and Parmenides are talking about negative predication, or predication itself, and not, as most commentators have heretofore thought, about negative

existential judgements and about existence.

There is a certain (recognized) circularity in my account of Parmenides' position. I have taken it as explicit enough in The Sophist that Plato is intent upon refuting that position, and I have used my understanding of Plato's refutations as evidence for my interpretation of The Way of Truth. I have then claimed that this interpreted position is in the tradition as the basis of Plato's problem in The Sophist. However, I need not make a claim this strong, namely, that the interpretation I have attributed to him is in fact the position of the historical Parmenides. It is enough for my purposes, that this is the problem that Plato starts with, and that he, at least, attributes it to Parmenides. I do not believe, at any rate, that evidence from the text of The Way of Truth as we have it is sufficient alone to pin a position on Parmenides.

In the Appendix, I have attempted to deal briefly with another statement of the problem of falsehood, found in The Theaetetus. I have done this for two reasons, (1) because I do not wish it to seem that the way I have taken Plato to be dealing with it in The Sophist is all that is to be said about the matter, and (2) because I wish to give some attention to another way of looking at the problem, both there and in The Sophist, which I do not think basically conflicts with my conclusions, and which I take to be important as an interpretation. I have left this for

the Appendix, because a deeper examination of it would involve an investigation of what is meant by the blending of the forms. This, I do not purport to have carried out in this paper. I have tried to give an interpretation of Parmenides' position on predication in general; I take Plato's position to be that the blending of the forms in some sense underlies predication, but I have not tried to discover what that means or to give any content to it whatsoever.

It has been my intention in this thesis, not merely to interpret texts, but (in Dr. Bosley's words) to diagnose a philosophical problem; to try to discover the errors at the source of the implausible contention that we cannot meaningfully say something false, and to try to discover the errors involved in Plato's refutation of that claim.

CHAPTER I

εἰ δ' ἄγ ἐγὼν ἔρέω, κόμισαι δὲ σὺ μῆθον
ἀκούσας,
αἴπερ δύοι μοῦναι διεζήσιντο εἰσι νοῆσαι:
ἢ μὲν ὅπως ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς οὐκ ἔστι μὴ
εἶναι,
πέιθοῦς ἔστι κέλευθος ('Αληθείη γὰρ ὅπηδεῖ),
ἢ δ' ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν τε καὶ ὡς χρεῶν ἔστι μὴ
εἶναι,
τὴν δὴ τοι φράζω παναπευθέα ἔμμεν ἀταρπόν·
οὔτε γὰρ ἀν γνοίης τό γε μὴ ἔόν οὐ γὰρ
ἀνυστόν
οὔτε φράσαις.

Come, I will tell you -- and you must accept my word when you have heard it -- the ways of enquiry which alone are to be thought: the one that IT IS, and it is not possible for IT NOT TO BE, is the way of credibility, for it follows Truth; the other, that IT IS NOT, and that it is bound NOT TO BE: this I tell you is a path that cannot be explored; for you could neither recognize that which IS NOT, nor express it.¹

Of this Kirk and Raven say:

Parmenides is attacking those who believe, as men always had believed, that it is possible to make a significant negative predication; but he is enabled to attack them only because of his own confusion between a negative predication and a negative existential judgement. The gist of this difficult and important fragment is therefore this: 'Either it is right only to think or say of a thing, "it is ..." (i.e. it is so-and-so, e.g. white) or else it is right to think or say only "it is not ..." (i.e. it is not something else, e.g. black). The latter is to be firmly rejected on the ground [a mistaken one, owing to the confusion between existential and predicative]

that it is impossible to conceive of Not Being, the non-existent. Any propositions about Not-Being are necessarily meaningless; the only significant thoughts or statements concern Being.²

Kirk and Raven seem here to be claiming the following: "it is not black" can be analyzed into two component parts, "it is not" in the sense of "it does not exist" and "it is not black" in the "predicative sense". But if "it" does not exist, then the sentence is not about something, but nothing; it is "about Not-Being", but that is inconceivable.

I have two objections to this thesis. The first is that if Kirk and Raven are claiming that Parmenides really confuses the existential and predicative senses of "is", then the sentence "it is not" simpliciter, meaning "it does not exist" is itself both predicative and existential and the analysis of it into component parts would proceed as for "it is not black". That is, "that which is not" does not collapse simply into "nothing" at this stage as they suggest. It is merely to pin a dogmatic position about what can be conceived on Parmenides, if the analysis stops here. But further, the status of the predicative component is never called into question; but when Plato, in his attack on Parmenides' position in The Sophist, sets up an explanation of negative predication, his main energy is devoted to the predicative component, as I shall attempt to show later. That is, while Kirk and Raven are, so to speak, dividing the sentence "it is not black" thus: "it is not/black";

Plato takes the sentence to be divided thus: "it is/not black", and devotes himself to an explanation of the component "not black". This provides us with evidence to the effect that this was the basis of Plato's problem as well.

At 243C2 of The Sophist the Stranger says:

And perhaps our minds are in this same condition as regards being also; we may think that it is plain sailing and that we understand when the word is used, though we are in difficulties about not-being, whereas really we understand equally little of both.

It seems to me that this serves as an apt criticism of Kirk and Raven's interpretation; they assume merely that Parmenides holds a dogma about the negative existential component of negative sentences, they do not consider the possibility that he holds a position about predication itself. Following Plato's hint that basic to an understanding of what it is to say "it is not ..." is an understanding of what it is to say "it is ...", I am going to put forward a different interpretation of Fr.1, which as I hope to show, partly in succeeding chapters, is the way Plato understands Parmenides' problem.

My claim is that Parmenides makes a confusion between a predicative "is", an existential "is", and an "is" meaning "is the same as". Not separating these senses of οὐτίν leads Parmenides to think that there is a contradiction involved in making negative statements. For example, when you say that something is not green, you are saying that

there is something which it is which is not, namely non-green, and so it both is and is the same as that which is not. By the same token when you say that it is not (meaning that it does not exist) as the senses of "is" are so inextricably mixed, for Parmenides what you must be saying is that there is something which it is that is not (namely non-existence) and so it both is and is the same as that which is not.

To adduce some evidence not from The Sophist to make it plausible that this confusion about predication, namely, that in saying that X is F, you are also saying that there is something, F, which X is the same as, is certainly in the tradition: in the passage beginning at 128E of the Parmenides, Socrates is made to say to Zeno that although it would be surprising to find that the Forms have contrary characters, that is if Unity itself could be shown to be many, or Likeness unlike, it is nonetheless not at all surprising that "sticks and stones" have contrary characters. Plato apparently considers it to be contradictory to say, for example, of Beauty itself that it is ugly presumably because he takes on wholesale this way of understanding "is" in that sentence. And it is significant that he considers it necessary to distinguish in this respect for Zeno, sentences about ordinary particulars and sentences about Forms.

And so, to return to my claim, it is not because they are about the unthinkable nothing that no negative statements

can be made, but because negative statements are contradictory. And the fact that IT IS NOT is unthinkable follows upon the fact that they are contradictory. So Parmenides' rejection of the second way does not depend upon a dogma about what is conceivable, that what is conceivable must first exist, as Raven claims.

Fr. 6:

χρή τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἔὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι γάρ εἶναι,
 μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν· τά σ' ἔγω φράζεσθαι ἀνωγα.
 πρώτης γάρ σ' ἀφ' ὁδοῦ ταύτης διεζήσιος <εἴργω>,
 αὐταρ ἐπειτ' ἀπό τῆς, ἦν δὴ βροτοὶ εἰδότες
 οὐδὲν
 πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμαχανίη γάρ ἐν αὐτῶν
 στήθεσιν ιθύνει πλακτὸν νόον· οἱ δὲ φοροῦνται
 κωφοὶ ὄμῶς τυφλοί τε, τεθηπότες, ἀκριτα φῦλα,
 οἵς τὸ πέλειν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶναι ταύτον νε-
 κού ταύτον, πάντων δὲ παλίντροπός ἔστι κέ-
 λευθος.

One should both say and think that Being Is; for To Be is possible, and Nothingness is not possible. This I command you to consider; for from the latter way of search first of all I debar you. But next I debar you from that way along which wander mortals knowing nothing, two-headed, for perplexity in their bosoms steers their intelligence astray, and they are carried along as deaf as they are blind, amazed, uncritical hordes, by whom To Be and Not To Be are regarded as the same and not the same; and (for whom) in everything there is a way of opposing stress.³

Kirk and Raven take it that in this fragment, Parmenides is proposing a third way, IT IS AND IT IS NOT, despite his claim in Fr.2 that there are only two ways, IT IS or IT IS

NOT. On the contrary I would like to argue that it is precisely because of their willingness to say negative sentences that the mortals are called "two-headed", that is, on my analysis, saying IT IS NOT is tantamount to "regarding IT IS and IT IS NOT as the same and not the same". That is, what is said not to be F is said to be the same as not F and yet cannot be the same as not F, for that which is cannot be the same as that which is not. It is true that in this passage Parmenides puts it: "But next I debar you ... etc.", but as against that, he is very firm in Fr.2 that IT IS and IT IS NOT are "the ways of enquiry which alone are to be thought".

Kirk and Raven, on the contrary, would lead us to believe that Parmenides believes that to say "X is F" and "X is not G" are contradictory. This is consistent with their view that it is the existential part of "is" that is the source of Parmenides' problem; hence in the latter sentence you assert that X does not exist while in the former you assert that it does. However the view that there are three ways is uneconomical, as Parmenides has already destroyed the possibility that the latter sentence could be said meaningfully. Further if it could not be said meaningfully that X is not G, then there cannot be a contradiction between "X is F" and "X is not G".

The first line of Fr.6 is a tremendously puzzling one; first of all it exemplifies very well what is the source of

the controversy, namely that Greek had many senses of that it is the task of the philosopher, not the translator per se, to unravel. For

χρή τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἔὸν ἔμμεναι· ἔστι
μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν.
γὰρ εἶναι,

is translated by Kirk and Raven:

That which can be spoken and thought needs must be; for it is possible for it but not for nothing to be.

Or by Kathleen Freeman:

One should both say and think that Being is; for TO BE is possible, and nothingness is not possible.

In the translation of Kirk and Raven a contrast is made between what can be spoken and thought, and nothing. In both cases, "needs must be" and "but not for nothing to be", "be" is ambiguous between an existential and a predicative sense. In the Freeman translation, on the contrary, the distinction is made between Being (or TO BE) and nothingness. "TO BE is possible" is ambiguous between "it is possible for something to be" and "Being is possible". It is not clear, if the latter, what is meant, nor indeed what is meant by "Nothingness is not possible", unless that Being can exist and nothingness cannot. But at any rate the original contrast between Being and Nothingness, rests upon translating "Being", rather than "that which is"; had it been translated in the latter way, the contrast would be absurd,

not merely mysterious, as it is with the translation "Being".

The point is not merely that as there were no accents used in the original manuscript, we cannot decide what the correct English equivalent to εἴναι, ἔστιν or ὄν is, but rather that even were we in a position to ask Parmenides to tell us what he means in English, it would not be possible for him to do so.

I think that the difficulties encountered in the Freeman translation of this passage should suffice as an example to refute those who take Parmenides to be talking about existence and the Existential pure and simple in The Way of Truth. One such is Reginald Allen in Thales to Aristotle. Part of his evidence for this view as against Kirk and Raven's, is that Parmenides does apply negative predicates to IT. Raven in Pythagoreans and Eleatics accounts for this on the basis that the predicates Parmenides applies to IT for the most part either come from or are associated with the right hand, or ethically positive, side of the Pythagorean table of opposites, (for example: one, limited, motionless). It is Raven's major thesis that Parmenides is a dissident Pythagorean intent on dispelling the dualism of Pythagoreanism by opting for one half of the system and refuting the rest on the grounds that it would be incoherent to hold that Being has opposite characteristics.

Now, just on the face of it, this is an unlikely interpretation. There is evidence to the effect that Parmenides

was a dissident Pythagorean. However, if he was writing The Way of Truth with the Pythagoreans in mind, it is still extremely unlikely that he would have chosen to refute only one half of the system and adopt the other. That, surely, is not the way dualistic systems are attacked.

Furthermore, if his objection to negative statements in general is a logical objection, as I have been intent on showing, then it will not do to add on his behalf that nonetheless we can apply some technically negative predicates to Being as they are ethically positive according to the Pythagoreans. On the basis of what has been established there is no possibility of there being a list of characteristics attributed to Being and a list attributed to Not-Being, which, if we accept the former, must be rejected; on the contrary, as I have tried to show, for Parmenides Not-Being is incoherent. For Parmenides there is no alternative to Being and its characteristics could not have opposites.

And here I have some rather formidable support from Plato. The first hypothesis of the Parmenides depends upon the confusions of Parmenides about "is". And it is the first hypothesis which I contend is very like what Parmenides is proposing: "If the One is to be One, it will not be a whole nor have parts". What Plato derives from this hypothesis is, of course, a reductio ad absurdum, for it will be without limits, have no shape, be nowhere, be neither in motion nor at rest, and so on, in short, can have no predicates and

thus cannot even be said to be (for if it is, there is something which it is (the same as), namely existence, and that is something else, therefore it will not be one). But an important piece of evidence that someone might take this as a position, not a reductio, is provided by the Neo-Platonists.

Proclus says:

[les hypotheses] ... developent le véritable un, purifie de toute pluralité, et la même sépare de l'être, supérieur à lui, et refusant l'attribution de: est.⁴

Plato, thus, uses negation to deny whole categories of predicates to the One. Thus to say that the One is, for example, timeless, is to say that no predicates associated with time can be applied to it. This provides us with an explanation of the use of negative predication in application to IT (or Being) in The Way of Truth. However, clearly Parmenides' position is not ultimately like the one which Proclus so gladly embraces, for he does apply the (positive) predicates "one", "limited", "whole", and "spherical" to IT.

However, any further elucidation of this would require an examination of just what Parmenides means by IT or Being or THAT which is, which is outside the scope of our present investigation. Let us, then, leaving off here, return to the first part of the interpretation given, to the analysis of negative predication.

I am going to have to apologize repeatedly throughout this paper for using the word "predicate"; I shall begin

here. It is clear that Plato, at least in some parts of The Sophist is talking about words, and about speaking and judging. In those contexts as I hope to show, it is safe to talk about predication as one mode (what I shall call the formal mode) of understanding the problems that he is dealing with. But thus my interpretation of The Way of Truth takes its credibility not so much from the text itself as from the way Plato chooses to deal with the Parmenidean problem of negation.

At 238D of The Sophist Plato sets out what he intimates to be "the greatest difficulty in our subject", namely that he who "refutes not-being" is at the same time forced to say that it "is not" or in Parmenides' very words "it is not possible for IT NOT TO BE". In other words, the ultimate paradox of Parmenides' position is that he cannot even get so close to the problem as to deny that one can make negative statements. Indeed, he cannot even so much as state the problem. But Plato is unwilling to leave the sophist locked in silence upon this issue. He takes it up as his task to explore the consequences of the problem and ultimately to get us out of it.

CHAPTER II

At 241A of The Sophist the Stranger says:

Kαὶ λόγος, οἶμαι, φευδής οὗτως κατὰ ταύτα νομισθήσεται τά τε ὅντα λέγων μὴ εἶναι καὶ τὰ μὴ ὅντα εἶναι.

"And therefore a statement will likewise be considered false, if it declares that things which are, are not, or that things which are not, are."⁵

It seems to me that there are three possible interpretations of this passage:

- 1) Saying that what exists, does not, and that what does not exist, does.
- 2) Saying that some fact exists when it does not, and that some fact does not exist when it does.
- 3) Saying that what is F (where F is some predicate) is not F, and what is not F, is F.

Position 1 seems to be inadequate as a definition of falsehood unless we put for "what", "some fact" in which case it collapses into Position 2. If "what" is taken to mean "some thing", then we can show that this is insufficient to define falsehood, since not all false statements are existential.

Position 2 seems to be Cornford's. About it he says:

Like the previous paragraph on the meaning of 'image', this passage only tells us what false thinking and false statement mean, namely, attributing

not-being to what is (the fact) or being to what is not (the fact).

This is, first of all, a mysterious interpretation. What is "being", here? If we understand him to be talking about the existence or non-existence of facts in this passage, at least no further textual support is given, and we might very well attack his translation of $\tau\alpha\ \delta\nu\tau\alpha$ as "the fact" as anachronistic. But further, if 'Theaetetus is sitting' is an example of a fact, what does it mean to say that it is a fact which does not exist, $\tau\alpha\ \mu\eta\ \delta\nu\tau\alpha$, but which is asserted to exist. What sense is to be made of the notion of non-existent facts?

Position 3 is the one I want to support, partly on the basis of an interpretation of The Way of Truth which lends weight to the supposition that the problem of negative predication is already in the tradition and partly on the basis of arguments in the middle part of The Sophist, where, as I take it, $\tau\circ\ \delta\nu$ cannot be understood other than as "is F", the copulative "is". So, I want to support the view that the Stranger is here giving a model of false statements. Thus, for example, to say that Theaetetus is sitting when he is not sitting, is false, and to say that Theaetetus is not sitting, when he is sitting, is false.

At 236E4, the Stranger says:

ὅπως γὰρ εἰπόντα χρὴ φευδῆ λέγειν ή
δοξάζειν δύντως εἶναι, καὶ τοῦτο φθεγγά-
μενον ἐντιολογίᾳ μη συνέχεσθαι, παντά-

πασιν, ὡς Θεαίτητε, χαλεπόν... Τετόλμη-
κεν ὁ λόγος ουτος ὑποθέσθαι τὸ μὴ ὅν
εἶναι· ψεῦδος γὰρ οὐκ ἀν αλλως ἐγίγνετο
ὅν.

You see, Theaetetus, it is extremely difficult to understand how a man is to say or think that falsehood really exists and in saying this not be involved in contradiction ... This statement involves the bold assumption that not being ($\tauὸ\ \muὴ\ ὅν$) exists, for otherwise falsehood could not come into existence.

This gets us straight into the problem which as I take it is central in The Sophist; we cannot understand what it would be to make a false statement without being able to make negative predicative statements meaningfully. In the one case, saying of that which is F, that it is not F, in order to understand that what was said was false, we would have to understand the original negative statement; in the other case, saying of that which is not F, that it is F, we would have to be able to make a negative predicative statement in order to say what is true; if we could not say what is the case meaningfully, then we would hardly be in a position to know what is not the case.

Two arguments directly follow the passage quoted above, both of them in support of this Parmenidean position (namely that $\tauὸ\ \muὴ\ ὅν$ is unintelligible), the first that $\tauὸ\ \muὴ\ ὅν$ cannot be applied to any thing that exists, the second that $\tauὸ\ \muὴ\ ὅν$ itself cannot even be said without contradiction.

Καὶ τοῦτο ἡμῖν που φανερόν, ὡς καὶ τὸ
τὸ τοῦτο ρῆμα ἐπ' ὄντι λέγομεν ἐκάστοτε.
μόνον γὰρ αὐτὸ λέγειν, ὥσπερ γυμνὸν καὶ
ἀπηρημῷμένον ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων, ἀδύν-
ατον· ή γάρ;

And this is plain to us, that we always use the word "something" for to speak of "something" in the abstract, naked, as it were, and disconnected from all beings is impossible, is it not?⁶

It is not possible to even start a sentence if the subject of that sentence does not have an existent referent. But if one can go on to say of something that it is not (F) one has contradicted the premise by which one was allowed to begin the sentence, namely, that its subject referred to an existent thing. This is the problem both with negative existential statements, i.e. statements of the form "this does not exist", and with negative predication in general (existential statements are treated as having the form of negative predication by both Parmenides and Plato).

Μή δύνται δέ τι τῶν ὄντων ἄρα προσγίγνεσθαι φῆσομεν δυνατὸν εἶναι;... Αριθμὸν δὴ τὸν ξύμπαντα τῶν ὄντων τίθεμεν... Μή τοίνυν μηδὲπιχειρῶμεν ἀριθμοῦ μῆτε πλῆθος μῆτε τὸ ἐν προς τὸ μὴ ὄν προσφέρειν.

But shall we assert that to that which is not, anything which is can be attributed? Now we assume that all number is among the things which are ... Then let us not even undertake to attribute either the singular or the plural of number to not-being.⁷

It is not clear what is meant by προσγίγνεσθαι and προσφέρειν at first here. Liddell and Scott gives "to be added" and "to be imposed" respectively. Certainly the "attributed" of the quoted translation is wrong for the purposes of my interpretation, for it implies that some predicate or attribute is being predicated or attributed to something, in this case, number, to something which is not. But this move has already been blocked, since we have just been shown that "something which is not" is contradictory. More evidence to this effect is provided by the fact that οὐτὶ has no article, that is, cannot be translated as is given "to that which is not". Thus the passage should be retranslated: "But shall we say that it is possible for anything of the things which are to be added to being ... We assume that all number is of the things which are ... Therefore let us not try to impose either the singular or plural of number upon οὐτὶ , being." But of course if we cannot give τὸ οὐ a grammatical number, we cannot say it at all.

I think that it may be a mistake to translate τὸ οὐ and εἰναι as confidently as I have done at this stage. For one thing, both of these Eleatic problems play upon neither εἰναι or τὸ οὐ being unravelled into their various senses, as the translation at least might impel one to do. It is only a few pages later at 241A where falsehood is defined that, as it seems to me, a Platonic position begins to develop.

But something very important is to be seen already at this stage and that is that we are quite clearly to be involved in an investigation of certain terms if we are to get to the bottom of this confusion; it is language that causes the Stranger to commit parricide on his father, Parmenides.

Ξε. Τῶν μὲν τοίνυν πολλῶν πέρι καὶ μετὰ τῷτο σκέψομεθ', αὖ δόξη, περὶ δε τοῦ μεγίστου τε καὶ ἀρχῆγοῦ πρώτου νῦν σκεπτέον.

Θεατ. Τίνος δὴ λέγεις; ή δῆλον ὅτι τὸ ὅν φησι, πρῶτον δεῖν διερευνήσασθαι τί ποθ'οι λέγοντες αὐτὸν δηλοῦν ἡγοῦνται.

Stranger: We will consider most of these (subjects) later, but now the greatest and foremost chief of them must be considered.

Theaetetus: What do you mean? Or, obviously, do you mean that we must first investigate the term "being" and see what those who use it think it signifies?⁸

If we take Plato to this point in the dialogue to have been giving the Eleatic reasons why negation and hence falsehood, is impossible, then this investigation is indeed at the heart of the problem.

What I now have to show is that $\tauὸ\ \sigmaὸν$ is used by Plato at least in relevant contexts, to mean "is" in the copulative sense; to do this involves a larger investigation into whether or to what extent he distinguishes senses of $\tauὸ\ \sigmaὸν$ and $\varepsilonἰναι$. The most striking evidence for the larger position, namely,

that he does distinguish senses of $\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu$, is to be found in the long passage between 254C - 257A.

The argument proceeds something like this: some kinds ($\tau\ddot{a}\ \gamma\acute{e}vn\eta$) will mingle with each other and others will not. Taking three very important kinds, namely, "being" itself ($\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu\ \alpha\acute{u}\tau\acute{o}$) rest, and motion, we see that rest and motion cannot mingle with each other but both rest and motion mingle with $\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu$, since they both are. But each of the three is nonetheless other than the others and the same as itself. But to say this is to introduce two other kinds, namely, same and other, unless same and other can be identified with two of the kinds that we already have. If rest is the same as other, then since motion will mingle with other then motion can be said to be (at) rest, which is impossible, and vice versa, if motion is the same as other. Similarly, if rest is the same as same, then since motion mingles with same, then motion can be said to be at rest, which is impossible, and vice versa. Hence, same and other cannot be identified with rest and motion. But the question remains:

'All'āpa $\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu\ nai\ \tau\ddot{o}\ \tau\alpha\acute{u}\tau\acute{o}\nou\ \omega\zeta\ \tilde{\epsilon}\nu\ \tau\iota\ \delta\iota\alpha\iota\omega\eta\tau\acute{e}\ou\ \eta\mu\iota\nu;$

"But should we conceive of "being" and "the same" as one?"⁹

If that were the case then when we said that rest is, and motion is, we should be saying that they are both the same, which is impossible. Hence same must be a fourth

kind. But as to the other, Plato says:

Ἄλλοι ματ σε συγχωρεῖν τῶν οὐτῶν τὰ μὲν αὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά,
τὰ δὲ πρὸς ἄλλα ἀεὶ λέγεσθαι.

"But I fancy you admit that among the entities, some are always conceived as absolute, and some as relative";¹⁰ (or Cornford's much better translation: "But I suppose you admit that, among things that exist (sic), some are always spoken of as being what they are just in themselves, others as being what they are with reference to other things").

Things then are sometimes said to be (*εἶναι*) simpliciter, sometimes to be F, that is, sometimes *εἶναι* takes an object. But this is not the case with other, which is never unqualified; things cannot be said to be other simpliciter. Hence being and other cannot be identical, so the other is a fifth class.

For this passage to be at all intelligible *τὸ οὐ* cannot be translated throughout "existence" as Cornford does it. What would tempt us to confuse same or other, same, in particular, with existence, if this is not to be taken as a mere exercise? Further, what can be made of a distinction between "relative" and "absolute" existence. But suppose instead we are trying to discover (as indeed Plato has given us warning that we are) the nature of *τὸ οὐ* or *εἶναι*. We find out two quite important things here: (1) that *τὸ οὐ* must not be identified with same -- when we say that something is F, then,

we are not saying that it is the same as F; (2) that has both a "relative" and an "absolute" sense, like other it sometimes needs to be filled out with an object, but unlike other sometimes can be taken simpliciter. If in English we did not have the verb "exist", we might very well distinguish two senses of the equivocal word "is" in the same way: sometimes, as in the sentence, "The geranium is red", "is" is followed by an object, sometimes as in "geraniums are" (exist), it is not.¹¹ If the interpretation given of The Way of Truth is correct, then point (1) is enough to destroy the so-called contradiction involved in negative predicative sentences. Point (2) is the issue I want to continue to press here.

But, in a way, this has to be filled in differently; it would be mistaken to take Plato to be talking here merely about certain locutions (namely, "is", and "is F") since he calls motion, rest, same, other and $\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu$ kinds ($\gamma\acute{e}vn\eta$). Perhaps the word "predicate" is an inadequate substitute for his word " $\gamma\acute{e}vn\eta$ ".

On the other hand I am going to continue to use the word "predicate" because it seems to be, at least much of the time, a convenient "formal mode" way of talking about something Plato usually treats of in a "material mode". At any rate, to express the point just made (point (2)) in the "material mode", sometimes the kind, $\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu$, does not mingle with another form but is $\alpha\acute{u}\tau\ddot{\alpha}\ \kappa\alpha\theta'\alpha\acute{u}\tau\ddot{\alpha}$, just by itself, or

per se, sometimes is πρὸς ἄλλο, does mingle with another. Thus, for example, if we say: "The one is at rest", there are three kinds: the one, or oneness, τὸ δύναμις and rest, which mingle.

Another issue which needs to be taken up here, however, is the status of the "kinds", but in particular the kinds same and other. It is hard to understand what it is for rest and motion to be kinds, particularly since they lend themselves gracefully to neither Cornford's set-theory talk nor indeed, to my predicate-talk.

But the kinds same and other cannot be given a set-theoretic content at all, since clearly there is no set of same things, or different things (unless perhaps the set of red things is a set of same things, i.e. same in that they are all red). But in that case, all sets would be sets of same things, hence same could not be a single kind, but many kinds. Not only that -- the so-called set of resting or motionless things would be a set of same things, since motionless things are the same in respect of their motionlessness -- but this is explicitly denied by Plato when he says that same and rest cannot be identical. The same kind of argument can be made out against other being a set. On the other hand, there is a great deal of plausibility in treating same and other in the "formal mode" as predicates (albeit πρὸς ἄλλο predicates) and it is particularly this πρὸς ἄλλο nature of them as predicates that allows Plato,

for example at 256C9, to say that motion is both other in one sense ($\pi\eta$) and not other in another, for (1) motion is other (than rest, existence, sameness), (2) motion is other (than the other) or not other, and hence escape from the problem that Zeno sets in the first part of The Parmenides and which the late-learners have so much difficulty with in The Sophist, namely: how can a thing be both like and unlike without contradiction?

Another piece of evidence for this view (that, in this case, same is a predicate referring to a kind, Sameness): at 256A7 the Stranger says that things are the same in virtue of their participation in sameness. That is, same is not a relation between two red things, red things are not the same because they are red, as we might think, but rather, two red things are the same because of their participation in sameness. And now since we have foreclosed on set-theory talk, we are hard pressed to treat kind-talk as being much different from the form-talk ($\epsilon\tau\delta\sigma\varsigma$) Plato uses later in the dialogue.

But now let me continue to press Point (2) that $\tau\circ\ \tilde{\sigma}\nu$ can be the "is" of predication. In the passage at 258E5, the Stranger says:

ὅ δὲ νῦν εἰρήκαμεν εἶναι τὸ μὴ ὄν, ή πει-
σάτω τις ὡς οὐ καλῶς λέγομεν ἐλέγξας, ή
μέχριπερ ἀν ἀδυνατῆ, λεκτέον καὶ ἐκείνῳ
καθάπερ ἡμεῖς λέγομεν, ὅτι συμμίγνυται τε
ἀλλήλοις τὰ γένη καὶ τὸ τε ὄν καὶ θάτερον
διὰ πάντων καὶ δι' ἀλλήλων διεληλυθότα τὸ
μὲν ἔτερον μετασχὸν τοῦ ὄντος ἔστι μὲν διὰ

ταχύτην τὴν μέθεξιν, οὐ μὴν ἐκεῖνό γε οὐ μετέσχεν ἀλλ' ετερον, ετερον δὲ τοῦ σὸντος ὃν ἔστι σαφέστατα ἐξ ἀνάγκης εἶναι μὴ ὃν.

But as for our present definition of not-being, a man must either refute us and show that we are wrong, or, so long as he cannot do that, he too must say, as we do, that the classes mingle with one another, and being and the other permeate all things, including each other, and the other, since it participates in being, is, by reason of this participation, yet is not that in which it participates, but other, and since it is other than being, must inevitably be not-being.

The argument here is only important as additional evidence in view of what has gone directly before -- an explanation of negative predication has been given such that when for instance it is said that a thing is not great, we understand by that that it is other (than great), not that it is small, or of middle size (257B6). What is important here for our purposes is that an understanding of "is not" has been given in terms of "is other". What is central here towards establishing Point (2), is that τὸ ὃν and θάτερον or τὸ ἔτερον are parallel in this passage. "Being and the other permeate all things" -- of everything it can be said that it both is (F) and is not (G); "including each other" -- everything, apparently including the kinds themselves,

and the kinds $\tauὸ\ σὐ$ and $\thetaάτερον$, can be said to be (F) and not to be (G); "the other, since it participates in being, is, by reason of this participation" -- the other is existent in virtue of its participation in $\tauὸ\ σὐ$; "yet is not that in which it participates, but other" -- $\tauὸ\ σὐ$ is not what the other is, the other is not $\tauὸ\ σὐ$, hence the other is other than $\tauὸ\ σὐ$. When we talk about $\tauὸ\ ἔτερον$ we understand that it is a $\piρὸς\ ἄλλο$ predicate, i.e. that the kind $\tauὸ\ ἔτερον$ has a locution "other (than F)" which refers to it; similarly, as the passage shows ($καὶ\ τὸ\ τε\ σὐ\ καὶ\ θά-$
 $\tauερον$), the locution "is (F)" refers to the kind $\tauὸ\ σὐ$. But the passage just quoted is also important because in it Plato, apparently with intention, plays on the word "is" so we get both its senses in the same sentence.

At least these three puzzles remain for the next chapter:

- (1) How does Plato himself explain negation and hence falsehood?
- (2) Why is $\tauὸ\ σὐ$ a kind ($\gammaένος$) among the other kinds?
- (3) How far has Plato solved the problem set by Parmenides?

CHAPTER III

At 255D4 of The Sophist, the Stranger makes out a distinction between the kinds τὸ ὄν and θάτερον thus:

ἀλλ' εἴπερ θάτερον ἀμφοῖν μετεῖχε τοῖχ
εἰδοῖν ὥσπερ τὸ ὄν, ἢν αὐτὸν ποτέ τι καὶ
τῶν ἔτερων ἔτερον οὐ πρὸς ἔτερον· γῦν
δὲ ἀτεχνῶς ἡμῖν, ὅτιπερ αὖτερον ἦ,
συμβέβηκεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἔτερου τοῦτο ὄπερ
ἔστιν εἶναι.

If the other, like being, partook of both absolute and relative existence (sic), there would be also among the others that exist (sic) another not in relation to any other; but as it is, we find that whatever is other is just what it is through compulsion of some other.

This translation (from the Loeb edition, H. N. Fowler) is unintelligible. Cornford's is:

If Difference partook of both characters (sic), there would sometimes be, within the class (sic) of different things, something that was different not with reference to another thing. But in fact we undoubtedly find that whatever is different, as a necessary consequence, is what it is with reference to another.

And this is intelligible but biased. To begin with, "ἀμφοῖν μετεῖχε τοῖχ εἰδοῖν", clearly, as the first translation makes explicit, refers back to the distinction made at 255C7 between absolute ($\alphaὐτὰ καθ' αὐτά$) and relative ($\piρὸς ἄλλο$); however, we cannot just let pass the innocuous translation of Cornford: "partook of both characters"

where the very un-innocuous word $\varepsilon\tilde{\iota}\delta\sigma\varsigma$ is used. A distinction between $\tau\ddot{o} \delta\nu$ and $\theta\acute{a}\tau\epsilon\rho\varsigma$ is being made out on the basis that the latter is always $\pi\rho\ddot{o}\varsigma \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\sigma$. The distinction depends upon a shift in levels; between talking about the $\gamma\acute{e}\nu\varsigma$, other and the $\gamma\acute{e}\nu\varsigma$, being, and the words "being" and "other". The way I have interpreted the argument, it goes something like this: the words "being" and "other" can be distinguished by their use in sentences: thus we can say both (1) motion is a form and (2) motion is, but we cannot say both (1) motion is other than rest, and (2) motion is other.

Clearly, however, this distinction between two senses of "is" cannot be made out at the level of genera as the word $\varepsilon\tilde{\iota}\delta\sigma\varsigma$ would suggest, as there being two forms of $\tau\ddot{o} \delta\nu$. This is blocked because in that case, one of them could be identical with $\theta\acute{a}\tau\epsilon\rho\varsigma$; however, if there is only one $\gamma\acute{e}\nu\varsigma$, $\tau\ddot{o} \delta\nu$, then its difference from $\theta\acute{a}\tau\epsilon\rho\varsigma$ must be explicated in terms of blending. Sometimes $\tau\ddot{o} \delta\nu$ blends with other forms, sometimes it does not; whereas $\theta\acute{a}\tau\epsilon\rho\varsigma$ always blends.¹²

We also cannot let pass Cornford's "within the class of different things" for the partitive $\tau\tilde{o}\nu \acute{\epsilon}\tau\acute{e}\rho\omega\varsigma$. As it seems to me, the clause could very well be translated without prejudicing the case in any one interpretation's favour: "There would sometimes be something among the things which are different (other), which was different (other) not with

reference to another ..." Just what it is which "another" or "some other" means, is at this stage ambiguous between another γένος and another thing. The latter is more plausible in fact, that is, one can say "This table is different from that table"; one never does say "This table is different from red". However, as it turns out, it is precisely in that way that Plato is going to fill in negation; hence the important way for our purposes in which "other" is always said πρὸς ἄλλο is πρὸς ἄλλον εἶδον, with reference to another form.¹³

καὶ διὰ πάντων γε αὐτὴν αὐτῶν φήσομεν εἶναι διεληλυθυῖαν· ἐν ἔκαστον γὰρ ἔτερον εἶναι τῶν ἄλλων οὐ διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ μετέχειν τῆς ἰδέας τῆς θατέρου.

And we shall say that it permeates them all; for each of them is other than the rest, not by reason of its own nature, but because it partakes of the idea of the other.¹⁴

This is a tremendously important point; just as we have seen before, things are the same as each other (and each of the genera is held in place as the same as itself) in virtue of their participation in Sameness, so things are other than each other (and the forms are prevented from collapsing into a single form, say, oneness, for instance) in virtue of their participation in other. To press this point, we would have to fully explicate the 'blending', 'mixing' or 'communion' of the forms at the level of genera; to continue to pursue

our investigation of negation at the level of discourse however, if Plato is going to cash in "not" in some sense as Otherness, then in every case where a sentence takes the form "X is not ..." the word "not" is an expression signifying the *γένος* other. What is tremendously difficult to explicate at this stage, then, is what role the form by which other is as it were followed, plays, if "not" is taking the role of predicate in some sentence. That is, what are we to make of the whole expression "not F" in some sentence "X is not F", if "not" is taken to be the (*πρὸς ἄλλο*) predicate?

'Οπόταν τὸ μὴ ὅν λέγομεν ὡς ἔσοικεν οὐκ ἐν-
αυτίον τι λεγόμεν τοῦ ὄντος, ἀλλ' ἔτερον
μόνον.

Οἶον, ὅταν, εἴπομεν τι μὴ μέγα, τότε μᾶλ-
λον τί σοι φαινόμεθα τὸ σμικρὸν ἢ τὸ ἕσον
δηλοῦν τῷ ρήματι;

When we say not-being (*sic*), we speak, I think, not of something that is the opposite of being, but only of something different.

For instance, when we speak of a thing as not great, do we seem to you to mean by the expression what is small any more than what is of middle size?¹⁵

Following the rationale I gave in Chapter II, we must re-translate *ὅπόταν λέγομεν τὸ μὴ οὐν*, "when we say 'it is not ...'". In that case a very general point is being made, namely that in any sentence of that form, "not" is an expression signifying other and thus does not signify the opposite of *τὸ οὖν*, but only something other than *τὸ οὖν*.

Cornford translates this, on the contrary: "When we speak of 'that which is not', it seems that we do not mean something contrary to what exists, but something that is different".

This, taken as an interpretation, of course, depends upon taking "that which is not" not as elliptical for "that which is not F", but as "that which does not exist"; however, the general point that I claim Plato is here making about how we are to understand "that which is not F" covers the special case of how we are to understand "that which does not exist". That is to say, "not" being the predicate in that sentence, rather than the mysterious and paradoxical "non-existence", X is merely "other", which is not the contrary of "existence".

The reason why "other" is not the contrary of $\tau\delta\ \delta\nu$ is filled in in the next sentence; for many F's (where F is a predicate) there is no single possible G when F is denied of some thing, for that thing to be. Thus if this geranium is said not to be red then it is not asserted at the same time that it is some specific colour. For Plato, then, we are to understand the function of "red" in "that geranium is not red" as an "end-expression", limiting the alternatives. Thus he takes it for granted that when we say that something is not large, the alternatives are two other sizes, small or middling. However, the expressions "not red", "not large" are not to be understood themselves to provide the

alternatives.

This is all very well (at least we shall leave it for the nonce), but how are the interpreters who have been taking Plato to have been talking about existence all along, going to deal with this passage? As I have explicated it, an interpretation of existential sentences would be a special case of a point being made about negative predication in general; they, however, are left having to explain how Plato can plausibly make out an analogy drawn between negative predicates and non-existence. The difficulty they face, is that unlike "... not red", "... does not exist", does not leave open several possibilities. If I am correct in saying that "red" in this case functions as an "end-expression", such that we know at least this much, that X must be some colour although we do not know precisely which, then where is the word which bears the same relation that colour does to red, for existence. What other possibilities are there on a par with "X exists"? The point is that Plato has foreclosed on "non-existence" being itself a possibility.

I want to use the foregoing argument in two ways: (1) it provides a tremendously powerful counter-example to Plato's explanation of negative predication in general and (2) it works against the interpretation of The Sophist which bases itself upon translating $\tau\delta\ \delta\nu$, "that which exists". It works against this, as those who have interpreted this passage in that way cannot show how Plato could possibly be drawing an

analogy between 'not existing', and 'being not red'.

One might want to claim that there are words which stand in relation to "non-existence" as "blue", "green", etc. stand to "not red": for example, "fictional", "mythical", "unreal", "dead". Of course, one simple reply that the position I have presented allows me to make to this, is that if Plato were here talking directly, about non-existence, he would have been obliged to point this out as analogous to his own example of "small", "middling", and "large". But he nowhere does this. This is a reply which might be sufficient in light of the other evidence I have presented to answer the claims of those who take Plato to have been talking about existence and non-existence all along. However, I have myself made another claim, namely that Plato's solution to the problem of negative predication is unsatisfactory, partly, at least, because he cannot account for "non-existent" in the same way as "not red", or "not large". So I think it is clear that we are obliged to examine the claim that e.g. "fictional" stands in the same sort of relation to "non-existent" as "red" does to "not green".

To say that something is non-existent, or that it does not exist are not ordinary claims that we make about things; indeed, they almost universally have a philosophical context. It takes philosophical sophistication, perhaps more philosophical sophistication than we ought to have, for us to want to unpack: "There is a unicorn in the garden" into:

"There exists an X such that X is a unicorn, etc." Ordinarily, it seems that when we say that something is non-existent, or does not exist, we either must fill it out further and say what we mean, or else we say it in a context such that what we mean is understood. This is not the case with "not red"; when we say that something is not red but green, "green" is not what we mean by "not red". The word "non-existent" in "Santa Claus is non-existent" does not (in Austin's terminology) wear the trousers; the word which does might be "unreal" or "mythical". Whereas "red" (or any other colour-word) does not wear the trousers for "not green" in "X is not green".

‘Η θάτερον μοι φύσις φαίνεται κατακεκερματίσθαι καθάπερ ἐπιστήμη.

Μία μὲν ἔστι που καὶ ἔκεινη, τὸ δ' ἐπὶ τῷ γιγνόμενον μέρος αὐτῆς ἔκαστον ἀφορίσθεν ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχει τινὰ εαυτῆς ἵδιαν· διὸ πολλαὶ τέχναι τ' εἰσὶ λεγόμεναι καὶ ἐπιστήμαι.

It seems to me that the nature of the other is all cut up into little bits, like knowledge. Knowledge, like other, is one, but each separate part of it which applies to some particular subject has a name of its own; hence there are many arts, as they are called, and kinds of knowledge, or sciences.¹⁶

What it means at the level of genera to talk of the other having parts (μέρος) is completely obscure; this is certainly an issue which those who would explicate must take note of. At the level of discourse

however, it is clear that Plato is again taking up the πρὸς ἄλλο nature of "other" or "not"; there are many completions for "not" in the sentence "X is not ..." At 256E6 the Stranger says:

περὶ ἔκαστον ἄρα τῶν εἰδῶν πολὺ μέν ἔστι τὸ ὅν, ἀπειρον δὲ πλήθει τὸ μὴ ὅν.

And so, in relation to each of the classes (sic), being is many, and not being is infinite in number.

In other words, X can be said to be many F's: presumably there will be more G's that it can be said not to be; that is, for example, if X is red, then it is not blue, black, green, etc. (ἀπειρον need mean no more than indefinite, here).

One of the points of the passage at 257C8 is that there are categories of otherness just as there are categories of knowledge. I think we must reject Cornford's point (made in Footnote 2 on page 291 of Plato's Theory of Knowledge): "The 'not-Just' is not 'the unjust', but any Form that is different from 'the Just'." It is true that the not-red is not the blue or the green, but what is not red is nonetheless some colour. What is said to be not red is not just anything at all; we must be able to infer something about X from "X is not red", otherwise that sentence is absolutely informationless. But if "red" does not, as I have suggested, function as an "end-expression" in that sentence, then the possibilities for what X might be are left completely open.

Thus I think we might interpret $\muέρος$ in the passage at 257C8 as referring to categories of predicates, e.g. colour predicates, time predicates, etc. There is something else (besides the counter-example of "non-existent") which is to be seen as, at least, inadequate about Plato's account of negation as we have here analysed it. That is, that he has given no account of "X is not coloured", where a whole category of predicates is being denied of X. While "red" in "X is not red" stands as an "end-word" by which we understand that X is at least some colour, "colour" in "X is not coloured" does not have the same function. We showed in Chapter I, when we discussed the reductio ad absurdum of the first hypothesis in The Parmenides that Plato understood what it is to deny whole categories of predicates of something (in this case, the One). But here, he cannot give an account of that, at least, not on an analogy with "not-red", "not-large", and so on.

Plato's example of a part of the other is "the not-beautiful". But X can be said to be not beautiful just as intelligibly as it can be said to be beautiful. The Parmenidean contradiction will no longer arise if other is one of the forms.

Πότερον οὖν, ὥσπερ εἶπες, ἔστιν οὐδενός τῶν ἄλλων οὐσίας ἐλλειπόμενον, καὶ δεῖ θαρροῦντα ἦδη λέγειν ὅτι τὸ μὴ ὃν βεβαίως ἔστι τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἔχον, ὥσπερ τὸ μέγα ην μέγα, καὶ τὸ οὐκαλόν ην οὐκαλόν καὶ τὸ μὴ μέγα μὴ μέ-

γα καὶ τὸ μὴ καλὸν μὴ καλόν, οὕτω δὲ
καὶ τὸ μὴ ὅν κατὰ ἦν τε καὶ ἔστι μὴ
ὅν, ἐνάριθμον τῶν πολλῶν ὅντων εἴδος
ἔν; ἢ τινα ἔτι πρὸς αὐτό, ὃ θεαίτητε,
& πιστίαν ἔχομεν.

And is this, as you were saying, as fully endowed with being as anything else, and shall we henceforth say with confidence that not-being has an assured existence and a nature of its own? Just as we found that the great was great and the beautiful was beautiful, the not-great was not-great and the not-beautiful was not beautiful, shall we in the same way say that not-being was and is not-being to be counted as one class among the many classes of being. Or have we, Theaetetus, any remaining distrust about the matter?¹⁷

The question which remains to be answered is: why does Plato say that τὸ μὴ ὅν is one of the forms (ἔν εἴδος)? One answer to this question must be that if we are to give to τὸ μὴ ὅν the same status as we have given τὸ ὅν (which is, after all, the whole object of the dialogue, or at least the part of it which is devoted to refuting Parmenides' position) then τὸ μὴ ὅν must be a γένος just as surely as τὸ ὅν. That is, there must be a parallel established between however we are to cash in "is not", and "is". But we have difficulties, of course, when "is" is itself said to be or refer to a γένος. For Plato does not make any distinction between saying "X is red" and "X participates in redness", "F is one", and "F blends with oneness". Heretofore we

have been taking Plato, in other words, to be giving us a predicative model; and there seems to be a straightforward dichotomy between such a model and the position that $\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu$ and $\tau\ddot{o}\ \mu\eta\ \delta\nu$ are forms or genera, (however we are to fill in what those terms mean).

Either "is" is the instrument, so to speak, in sentences, expressing the blending of the forms or else it is itself a form and in some sense a predicate like "other", and "same". If the former, and it is not a form, then what is it? The theory of forms rests to some extent (it is not our business here to discover to what extent) upon there being only two kinds of things: ordinary particulars and forms. If on the contrary "is" refers to a $\gamma\acute{e}voc$, $\tau\ddot{o}\ \delta\nu$, just as "not" refers to a $\gamma\acute{e}voc$, $\theta\acute{a}tepou$, and is not the instrument in sentences for expressing the blending of forms, then the model on which we were to understand what it was to predicate, or by which we were to understand that two or more forms were blended, becomes itself a form. It is as if we had a number of rocks, which we wanted to move, and someone presented us with a rock-moving machine; but when we set about trying to use our new machine it turned out itself to be merely an oddly carved rock.¹⁸ I have tried to show that since the first option is closed to him Plato has come down on the second. However, the result of this is that the power of the theory of predication that he presents is lost, and he falls heir to the sort of

criticism Wittgenstein makes in The Blue Book.

If the meaning of the sign ... is an image built up in our minds when we see or hear the sign, then first let us adopt the method we just described of replacing this mental image by some outward object seen, e.g. a painted or modelled image. Then why should the written sign plus this painted image be alive, if the written sign alone was dead? -- In fact, as soon as you think of replacing the mental image by, say, a painted one, and as soon as the image thereby loses its occult character, it ceases to impart any life to the sentence at all ... The mistake we are liable to make could be expressed thus: We are looking for the use of a sign, but we look for it as though it were an object co-existing with the sign.¹⁹

On the foregoing basis, one might again challenge my use of the word "predicate" for the genera or the forms. I have two replies: one that Plato relies upon there being a distinction made between words and things: when he says that the blending of the forms underlies discourse, for instance. But secondly, my task here has been twofold: both to interpret an issue in The Sophist and also to diagnose it, that is to find out what is wrong both with it as a problem, and with its solution. And here, I think that we have shown that the use of the word "predicate" in interpreting Plato has also been useful in exposing one of his errors.

APPENDIX

There are still a few issues, which, although not directly part of the argumentation of this thesis, are still integrally connected with Plato's solution to the problem of falsehood and which hence, I would like to explore here. These are: (1) What does Plato mean when, throughout the part of The Sophist which I have mainly been dealing with (about 254 - 259) he talks about the nature of a form? (2) Can the "formal-mode" predicate-talk I have been using to investigate Plato's problem, be seen as consistent with a version of Position 2 (outlined at the beginning of Chapter II)? (3) How are we to see the definition of falsehood (at 241) in The Sophist, as consistent with older definitions, like the one given at 189C of The Theaetetus? (As the last two questions themselves constitute the basis for a thesis, I shall not pretend to do any more than suggest ways of investigating them).

Towards answering question (1): It has been one of my main contentions that the source of Plato's failure to propose an adequate way of dealing with negative predication (and, indeed, predication in general) has been his inability to conceive of a word having a use without having an object to which it refers. I think that this contention can be brought out particularly clearly when we examine what he means by, and to what use he puts, the notion of the nature

of a form.

At 257A9 the Stranger says:

Οὐκοῦν δὴ καὶ ταῦτα οὐ δυσχεραντέον ἐπεί-
περ ἔχει κοινωνίαν ἀλλήλοις ἡ τῶν γενῶν
φύσις.

Then we must not be disturbed by this either, since by their nature the classes have participation in one another.

Further on (at 258B8) he says:

Πότερον οὖν, ὥσπερ εἴπεις, ξετιν οὐδενὸς
τῶν ἄλλων οὐσίας ἐλλειπόμεν, καὶ δεῖ
θαρροῦντα ἥδη λέγειν ὅτι τὸ μὴ ὅν βε-
βαίως ἐστὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν ἔχον.....

And is this as you were saying, as fully endowed with being as anything else, and shall we henceforth say with confidence that not-being has an assured existence and a nature of its own?

From these quoted passages, it at once looks like we have an unexpected multiplication of entities; we have the forms or genera, and we also have their natures. Presumably, or at least so we might have thought, the forms do not have natures; they are, so to speak, themselves the last word. We do not expect, as R. E. Allen so memorably puts it, to be able to scratch the form Doghood behind the ears.²⁰ But we have been dealing with only one part of The Sophist; we have not tried to explicate (nor are we going to try) just what it means to say the two forms blend. But it is in this

connection that the notion of a form's nature arises; the forms blend according to their natures; it is because of the nature of the form motion that it cannot be said to blend with rest. No other rationale could be given for why some forms will blend with some forms and not others. The nature of a form, if it is not to be itself characterized as another form, can be nothing other than the cause of the blending or non-blending of that form with another (but, of course, one can hardly help but characterize the nature of a form as itself another form, if one is to characterize it at all. However, this point is beyond our scope).

But the point about this that is interesting for our purposes is that what we might be inclined to put in terms of word usage, at least frequently, Plato puts in terms of the nature of the forms (Plato says that one cannot for instance, say that motion is (at) rest because that is contradictory). The real point here, for him, is that we cannot say that, because the actual form motion will not, by its nature, blend with the actual form, Rest. The way the forms are dictates what can be said about them, or presumably, what can be said at all.

And yet, this argument is just backwards from our point of view. We see Plato being led to postulate the existence of certain forms and their natures, precisely on account of his observation of our ways of speaking. What he sees as the underlying cause of forms of speech, we can only see as

an ad hoc explanation.

I would like to take up Question (2) in the light of Question (3). The argument from 189A - C5 in The Theaetetus proceeds something as follows: On the analogy of perception (e.g. he who sees something, sees some one thing, which is, since it is one - εἴπερ ἕνος), he who holds an opinion holds an opinion of something, some one thing (έν τι) and hence something that is. But he who holds an opinion of what is not, holds an opinion of nothing; holding an opinion of nothing, is not holding an opinion. So it is impossible to hold an opinion of that which is not; hence a false opinion cannot be an opinion of that which is not. (This argument has an analogue which we have already discussed at 237Dff of The Sophist. The inference here, just as in The Sophist, plays upon senses of "is".) False opinion is then defined as follows:

Ἄλλοδοξίαν τινὰ οὖσαν φευδῆ φαμεν εἶναι
δόξαν, ὅταν τίς τι τῶν ὄντων ἀλλο αὐτῶν
ὄντων ἀνταλλαξάμενος τῇ διανοίᾳ φῇ εἶναι.
οὗτω γὰρ ὃν μὲν ἀεὶ δοξάζει, ἔτερον δὲ
ἀνθ' ἔτέρου, καὶ ἀμαρτάνων οὐ ἐσκόπει δικαί-
ως ἀν καλοῖτο φευδῆ δοξάζων.

We say that false opinion is a kind of interchanged opinion, when a person makes an exchange and says that one thing which exists is another thing which exists. For in this way he always holds an opinion of what exists, but of one thing instead of another; so he misses the object

he was aiming at in his thought and might fairly be said to hold a false opinion.

Here we see, in a very short passage, Plato exposing all of the presuppositions which ultimately make his own answer to Parmenides in The Sophist so unsuccessful. He cannot get away from the analogy of perception, so that when one says something, one says a thing, when one thinks something, one thinks a thing, just as when one sees something, there is a thing which one sees. He does not distinguish, in other words, the thing said (i.e. the sentence) from what it is said about.

But let us get back to answering Questions (2) and (3). False opinion is here characterized as confusing one thing for another. In The Sophist it is characterized, or so I have taken it, of saying of this X, which is F, that it is not F (or, of course, of this X, which is not F, that it is F). The question is, can we reconcile the two accounts? Presumably we can, for when we say "That table is brown", we are speaking of the brown table, or to put it in the unfortunate Platonic way, we are saying the brown table. If it is not the case that the table is brown, what we have done is to confuse it with another table. What is in question from this point of view, is the existence of the object before us, the brown table; or to put it another way, we are wondering whether there is a brown table before us (for we are never in doubt that there is something there).

This is the dark underside of the problem I have attributed to Plato in The Sophist. There he seemed to be getting at the problem of falsehood from the point of view of language, that is, starting with the common sense attitude that we do make negative statements and that we can make false remarks. But here, at least, we see that he has taken on too much of what the Sophist has bequeathed to him.

But I cannot pursue this issue further, for it too, like almost all of our enquiry, has as its source the blending of the forms. I have explicated only one problem in The Sophist; I cannot pretend that it is the most important one.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kirk and Raven, The Pre-Socratic Philosophers, Cambridge University Press, 1966, page 269; quotation is Fr. 2 of Parmenides' The Way of Truth.
2. Ibid., page 269.
3. Ibid., page 270; quotation is Fr. 6 of Parmenides' The Way of Truth.
4. Proclus, Commentaire sur le Parmenide, Frankfurt am Main, Minerva, 1962.
5. Fowler, H.N., Plato's Theaetetus and Sophist, The Loeb Classics Library, Harvard Press, 1967, 237D1.
6. Ibid., 237D1.
7. Ibid., 238A6.
8. Ibid., 243C9.
9. Ibid., 255B7. There is an implicit distinction made in this passage between identity and sameness. Identity at 255B7 is made out in terms of oneness. Same and other are distinct genera impossible consequences follow from their being one with any of the other genera named. At 139D of The Parmenides (Cornford's translation) Parmenides says: "Nor yet can it (the One) be the same as itself. For the character of unity is one thing, the character of sameness another. This is evident because when a thing becomes 'the same' as something, it does not become 'one'."
10. Fowler, op. cit., 255C7.
11. In his article entitled "Plato on Not-Being" (published in Plato: Metaphysics and Epistemology, ed. Gregory Vlastos, Doubleday & Co., 1970) G.E.L. Owen says: "In the Sophist Plato had gone some way to disentangling the first two of these uses (the predicative "is" from "="). I do not myself think he was equally successful with the third existential use; he seems in the end content to assimilate it to (scrap it in favour of) the others. That is, he treats "to be" and "not to be" alike as incomplete or elliptical expressions which always call for some completion: to be is just to be something or other." This passage (at 255C7) clearly works against Owen's claim here.

12. The question remains unanswered of course, why Plato uses the word $\epsilon\nu\deltao\varsigma$ here.
13. I have taken it for granted that Plato is not making a linguistic recommendation here -- that we retranslate "it is not ..." as "it is different from ...", but that on the contrary, "it is different from ..." is what "it is not ..." means.
14. Fowler, op. cit., 255E3.
15. Fowler, op. cit., 257B3.
16. Fowler, op. cit., 257C8.
17. Fowler, op. cit., 258B8.
18. This metaphor was suggested to me by Dr. Cody, although he now denies it.
19. Wittgenstein, The Blue Book, Harper Torchbooks, page 5.
20. Allen, "Participation and Predication in Plato's Middle Dialogues", in Vlastos, ed., op. cit.

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